

BACKGROUND

The Pennsylvania WIC Program is committed to working together with its local agency, retail store and community partners to continue to provide essential services to our participants. With the passage of the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act by congress, we now have more flexibility when providing WIC services while protecting both staff and participants from potential exposure.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO WIC CLINICS?

There should be a small number of WIC clinics open and the number of hours they operate should be reduced. Clinics will only be open to reload benefits to eWIC cards. Initial certification and recertification appointments will be conducted virtually through ZOOM or over the phone, however, each case will be assessed individually. Additionally, each participant or endorser can designate someone else to come to the clinic to load benefits on their card.

To decrease the spread of COVID-19, we discourage bringing children or infants to the clinic at this time. All direct ship products can still be shipped to the participant's homes, and all compliance monitoring activities are suspended until the end of the disaster declaration.

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT STATE RETAILERS?

Compliance activities for retail stores are suspended statewide until the end of the disaster declaration. Minimum inventory requirements will not be enforced. However, any product that is unavailable in the store will be noted and staff will follow-up within six months after disaster resolution to ensure the product is now available. The approved product list is being reviewed for flexibilities and any new product authorizations will be communicated to vendors.

WILL THIS IMPACT WIC BENEFITS OR PRODUCTS?

As COVID-19 continues to impact residents across the state, the state agency has heard of problems finding WIC foods in grocery stores. We are aware that a few manufacturers, including formula manufacturers, are increasing production to try to replenish supplies, but there is inconsistent availability across the state.

It is not possible to extend the lifespan of WIC benefits on a card—they are set to expire at 11:59 p.m. on the last day of each month. However, the next set of benefits is immediately available at 12:00 midnight on the first of the month. We will continue to monitor the status of foods and make adjustments to the program as necessary.

WHAT IS IN PLACE TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19?

Since eWIC technology requires a person to physically be in the WIC clinic to receive benefits, appointments will be brief, and the following steps will be taken:

- Staff will use gloves to handle WIC cards;
- Card readers and signature pads will be wiped down with bleach wipes or medical grade sanitizers after each use; and
- Hard surfaces in waiting areas will be wiped down throughout the day.

The state agency is also working to get sanitizer, medical grade gloves and sanitizer wipes for all WIC clinics statewide. As the situation develops, the agency continues to assess and implement ways for individuals to get benefits reloaded to their cards without being physically present during appointments. New guidance will be rolled out as solutions are finalized.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit the department's [website](#) and the [CDC website](#). Help is available, contact the Crisis Text Line by texting **PA to 741-741**.